

What is Claimed is:

1. A protection apparatus that is configured to float on a body of water, comprising:

a composite-based durable barrier structure, the barrier structure configured to hold a net in place, wherein the protection apparatus protects an area in the body of water or abutting the body of water from waterborne craft.

2. The protection apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

at least one pontoon coupled to the barrier structure and configured to act as a floating component for the protection apparatus when the protection apparatus is placed in the body of water.

3. The protection apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the at least one pontoon includes at least three pontoons, wherein a first pontoon is coupled to a portion of the barrier structure adjacent to one end of the barrier structure, wherein a second pontoon is coupled to a portion of the barrier structure adjacent to an opposite end of the barrier structure, and wherein a third pontoon is coupled to a portion of the barrier structure

corresponding to a position substantially halfway between the two ends of the barrier structure.

4. The protection apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the first and second pontoons are of a first length, and

wherein the third pontoon is of a second length greater than the first length.

5. The protection apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the barrier structure includes a beam that spans an entire length of the barrier structure, wherein the beam is a composite-based structure.

6. The protection apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the beam is in a range of 40 to 50 feet in length.

7. The protection apparatus according to claim 5, further comprising:
a plurality of net holding units coupled to the beam and disposed above the beam when the protection apparatus is placed in the body of water, the plurality of holding units configured to hold the net in place on

the protection apparatus and to provide support for the net when the net is subject to normal and/or tangential forces.

8. The protection according to claim 1, wherein the composite-based durable barrier structure is a fiberglass reinforced plastic durable barrier structure.

9. A connector for a protection barrier system that includes a plurality of protection barrier units with adjacent ones of the protection barrier units coupled to each other by way of the connector, the connector comprising:

a tensile member configured to couple to the adjacent protection barrier units and to accept and dissipate a tensile force provided from the adjacent protection barrier units; and

a dampening member disposed at least partially around the tensile member and configured to accept and dampen a force provided from the adjacent protection barrier units.

10. The connector according to claim 9, wherein the tensile member is a chain having a plurality of links; and

wherein the dampening member includes:

a polymer material; and

a rubber outer structure that is fitted around the polymer material.

11. The connector according to claim 10, wherein the polymer material is a polyurethane mold.

12. The connector according to claim 9, further comprising:

first and second connecting sections respectively provided at first and second ends of the connector, the connecting sections including the dampening member and being sized so as to fit into similarly-shaped holding sections of brackets that are rigidly coupled to end of the adjacent protection barrier units.

13. A protection apparatus that is configured to float on a body of water, comprising:

a plurality of barrier units positioned side-by-side, each of the barrier units comprising a composite-based durable barrier structure, the barrier structure configured to hold a net in place in order to protect an

area in the body of water or abutting the body of water from waterborne craft; and

a plurality of connectors respectively provided between adjacently-positioned ones of the barrier units positioned side-by-side,

wherein each of the connectors includes a tensile member and a dampening member.

14. The protection apparatus according to claim 13, further comprising:

at least one pontoon provided for each of the barrier units and configured to act as a floating component for the protection apparatus when the protection apparatus is placed in the body of water.

15. The protection apparatus according to claim 13, wherein the tensile member is a chain having a plurality of links; and

wherein the dampening member includes:

a polymer material; and

a rubber outer structure that is fitted around the polymer material.

16. The protection apparatus according to claim 15, wherein the polymer material is a polyurethane mold.

17. The protection apparatus according to claim 13, further comprising:
first and second connecting sections respectively provided at first and second ends of the connector, the connecting sections including the dampening member and being sized so as to fit into similarly-shaped holding sections of brackets that are rigidly coupled to end of the adjacent barrier units.

18. A pontoon for providing buoyancy for a protection barrier to be provided in a body of water, comprising:

a metal structural member;

a urethane inner shell that encases a portion of the metal structural member;

a polyethylene region that encases the urethane inner shell; and

a polyurethane elastomer or polyurea outer shell that encases the polyethylene region,

wherein a portion of the metal structural member extends out from the outer shell to thereby couple to a portion of the protection barrier.

19. A method of protecting a region either in a body of water or adjacent to the body of water, the method comprising:

constructing a composite-based durable barrier structure, the barrier structure configured to hold a net in place, wherein the barrier structure includes a plurality of composite barrier units connected together via connectors; and

placing the composite barrier structure in the body of water, to thereby provide protection for the region.

20. The method according to claim 19, wherein the composite barrier structure is a fiberglass reinforced plastic (FRP) composite.

21. A winch gate for a protection barrier system provided in a body of water, comprising:

a winch containing a length of wire wrapped around a spool;

a metal fair lead that is disposed adjacent to the winch and that is positioned so as to accept the wire when the winch is controlled to unspool the wire from the spool;

a hook coupled to an end of the wire and configured to be coupled to a chain that is itself coupled to a protection barrier module of the protection barrier system,

wherein, when the winch is controlled to spool the wire back onto the spool after the winch was controlled to unspool the wire from the spool and after the wire has been coupled to the chain, the chain is pulled through the metal fair lead and thereby onto the winch gate, to thereby allow the chain to be affixed to the winch gate.

22. The winch gate according to claim 21, wherein the winch is solar charged and battery operated.

23. The winch gate according to claim 21, wherein the protection barrier module is an end unit of a plurality of protection barrier modules that make up the protection barrier system, wherein connectors are provided between adjacent ones of the protection barrier modules.

24. The winch gate according to claim 21, wherein the metal fair lead has a cylindrical shape with a substantially straight proximate portion and a downward bending distal portion, the downward bending portion having a downward bend of less than 20 degrees with respect to the proximate portion.